

LONDON REUTER IN ENGLISH 2322 GMT 12 MAR 74 X

(TEXT) CARACAS, MARCH 12, REUTER--A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS TONIGHT DAMAGED A NATURAL GAS PIPELINE OUTSIDE THE VENEZUELAN CAPITAL A FEW HOURS AFTER THE INAGURATION OF PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PREZ.

FIRST REPORTS SAID THE EXPLOSIONS WERE ACCIDENTAL, BUT A WOMAN LATER TELEPHONED CARACAS RADIO STATIONS TO CLAIM THEY HAD BEEN CAUSED BY BOMBS PLACED BY LEFTWING GUERRILLAS.

SHE SAID TIME BOMBS HAD ALSO BEEN PLACED IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND, THE CARACAS HILTON, TIMED TO EXPLODE LATER TONIGHT.

SHE SAID THE BOMBS WERE A PROTEST AGAINST THE INAGURATION OF PRESIDENT PREEZ--WHO USED STRONG-ARM TACTICS AGAINST VENEZUELAN GUERRILLAS AS INTERIOR MINISTER IN 1962-63 AND AT THE PRESENCE OF MRS PAT NIXON, WIFE OF THE U.S. PRESIDENT, AND CHILEAN ECONOMY MINISTER FERNANDO LENIZ AT THE INAGURATION.

12 MAR 2333Z LAM/BG*****

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PRESIDENT - EXPLOSION 3 CARACAS:

THERE WAS NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION THAT THE GAS PIPELINE EXPLOSION HAD BEEN CAUSED BY SABOTAGE, AND THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY KNOWN.

THERE WAS NO SIGN OF STEPPED-UP SECURITY AT THE HILTON HOTEL, WHERE THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS CORPS ACCOMPANYING MRS. NIXON WAS INSTALLED AND WHERE MANY OF THE FOREIGN DELEGATIONS TO THE INAUGURATION WERE STAYING UNDER ALREADY TIGHT POLICE GUARD.

MRS. NIXON IS STAYING AT THE RESIDENCE OF ROBERT MCINTOCK, THE U.S. AMBASSADOR HERE.

THE EXPLOSIONS OCCURRED NEAR A NATURAL GAS SUPPLY DEPOSIT EIGHT MILES EAST OF THE CAPITAL ON THE CARIBBEAN SHORE.

REUTER 1947